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ABSTRACT

The booklet is the first in a series on the ways that child care centers can contribute to the healthy growth, and development of preschool children and focused on are the ways in which children learn. A child is said to be equipped to learn through the use of his senses, his muscles, curiosity, language, and organizing ability. It is explained that a child learns through activities based on exploration, trial and error, avoidance of pain, pleasure, limitation, participation, and communication. The child is thought to need to learn to trust the world, know his own body, know familiar objects, engage in human relationships, know time concepts, have realistic fears, know how to handle anger, know how to cope with frustration and know how to be responsible. Teachers are encouraged to gain the confidence of the child, provide an atmosphere for learning, be a good example, talk and listen, help a child control behavior, and love the child. (For other booklets in the series see EC 052 601 through EC 052 604). (DB)

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THE WAYS CHILDREN LEARN

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preface

The influence of a good child care center is not limited to the children who are cared for, the staff itself, or the mothers who participate. Older and younger brothers and sisters, friends, neighbors, volunteers may all gain from changes brought about by the child care center. In some instances, the neighborhood is brightened up, inspired by the attractiveness of the center, and pride emerges to spark new efforts. School teachers and principals, ministers, and local agencies also grow more helpful, more interested in children.

This comes from the friendliness of the center staff to the whole family and to the neighbors. It also comes from the quality of every aspect of the child care center—the cheerful setting, the good food, the well-organized space for activity, the children's progress in learning and self-control, the experience of helping to improve the center itself and the neighborhood, the resulting good feelings, and a contagious sense of progress.

At one child care center on a dirt road full of deep ruts and holes, with some adjacent yards full of junk and neighboring houses in a run down condition, major changes occurred. The city street department improved the road; the real estate agent repaired and painted nearby houses while resident owners painted their own; and volunteers from the police department cleaned up the junk. Yards bare and full of scraggly weeds were seeded and made neat. It all takes effort, but the response releases new energy.

Thus child care centers have the opportunity of providing massive help for the nation's children through contributing to wholesome physical, mental, and social development, and also to an improved environment for the children. The child in a good center all day will receive good food, exercise, and rest to build a healthy body, as well as assistance in correction of physical problems.

Through constant communication with teachers and aides, language is developed, vocabulary is enlarged naturally, thought is stimulated, and a healthy self-concept evolves. Use of toys and other play and work materials involves exercise and development of sensory-motor skills, along with many concepts of color, size, shape, weight, balance, structure, and design. Stories and songs encourage integration of feelings, action, and ideas, while developing imagination.

Spontaneous play in the housekeeping corner or with blocks allows the child to play out his observations of the family and the community. Other children may broaden their ideas and skills through watching and joining in the play.

Neither health, nor adequate mental development, nor constructive social behavior can be guaranteed for the rest of the child's life if the following years do not also meet his needs adequately. But good total development in childhood can provide prerequisites for further growth and can help to prevent the beginnings of retardation, disorganized behavior, early delinquency, and emotional disturbance.

acknowledgments

I owe most to two groups of workers with young children: first, my former colleagues at Sarah Lawrence College, who taught the children at the Sarah Lawrence Nursery School—Evelyn Beyer, long time director of the nursery school, and Marian Gay, Rebekah Shuey, and also colleagues at Bank Street College for Teachers with whom at different times I shared teaching and research experiences. But in addition, I owe much to the directors and teachers of many nursery schools and day care centers across America and around the world. Especially exciting to me were the Basic Education schools of India, initiated by Gandhi and Zakir Hussain; and Bal Ghar in Ahmedabad, India—a unique integration of the best American nursery school concepts, Montessori principles, Basic Education, and some traditional Indian patterns, organized with a special balance of good structure and flexibility that I came to know as Kamalini Sarabhai's genius.

I am equally grateful to the creative staff of the North Topeka Day Care Center—Josephine Nesbitt and Forestine Lewis, who "dreamed up" the center to meet the needs of deprived children in their area; and among the intercultural group of teachers and directors, Sarita Peters, Mary Wilson, Jane Kemp, Connie Garcia, Chris Smith —each of whom had special talents in handling the children, stimulating and supporting their growth. Cecile Anderson has been especially generous in sharing her unique story—techniques, observations of children's favorite stories, and ways of looking at children's constructiveness and pride in achievement. Among the volunteers, Lillian Morrow was an inspiration to all of us with her sensitive, skillful, and quietly warm ways, and Carol Rousey contributed expert and helpful assessments of the children's speech and language development.

The leadership of the local OEO director, Robert Harder, and later J. A. Dickinson, stimulated staff, parents and neighbors, Girl Scouts, occupational therapy groups in local hospitals to help paint, plant shrubbery, build outdoor play equipment, provide toys so as to make possible a pleasant and well-furnished environment for learning and for total development. Shirley Norris, director of Kansas State Day Care, Anna Ransom, wise dean of Topeka day care efforts, and Mr. S. Revely, the local realtor who renovated the neighborhood houses for the Center, all gave time, energy, and warm interest to the development of the Center.

I also want to express my appreciation to the responsive mothers whose progress along with that of their children gave me a new understanding of human potentialities in children and adults of all ethnic groups in America and the urgency of making it possible for these to be expressed.

These guidelines were initiated by Dr. Caroline Chandler, former Chief, Children's Mental Health Section, National Institute of Mental Health, and were supported by PHS Grant R12–MH9266, the Menninger Foundation, and Children's Hospital of the District of Columbia. They were prepared under the supervision of Mrs. Franc Balzer, Director of Head Start's Parent and Child Center Program.

Lois B. Murphy, Ph.D.

THE WAYS CHILDREN LEARN

When a center is near a brook or on the edge of a lake, explorations with water, sand, and stones encourage discovery and creativity.

Learning is a natural part of life. Every normal baby comes into the world with all the equipment he needs to learn. Without a teacher or a school book, the infant begins learning from the moment he is born. If he is given the freedom to find out about his world and the encouragement to do so, he will continue to learn for the rest of his life.

If learning stops along the way, it is because the adults around the children have allowed his natural learning urge to suffocate. The challenge to the mother and the child care teacher is to keep the learning processes alive—to see that the child has many different experiences in which the learning equipment he was born with can work for him. A child in such an environment will learn for himself.

how is a child equipped to learn?

Senses—Every normal human being is equipped with senses that tell him about the world around him. He sees, hears, tastes, feels, and smells, and by doing so, learns what the objects and people around him are like. The infant feels the warmth of his mother's arms; tastes the milk she feeds him; and hears her voice. Soon her face comes into focus and he sees what she looks like. As he grows bigger and is able to move about more, he picks out the things he wants to look at. He chooses the colors that please him most. He smiles in the direction of the voices he recognizes.

Learning body control and coordination is a challenge.

By the time the child comes to a child care center, he already has stored up a vast knowledge of his world just by looking, listening, touching, tasting, and smelling. Chances are he already has some positive likes and dislikes which make him a little bit different from every other child. The wise teacher makes the most of the child's sensory equipment by providing a variety of experiences that allows him to broaden his knowledge of the world through all of his senses.

Muscles—Have you noticed that an infant rarely lies still unless he is sleeping? If you have ever tried to keep up with a two-year-old, you know that he is always climbing or running in the opposite direction. This is how the very young child learns what his muscles can do for him. Many babies pull themselves to their feet to try out newly developed arm and leg muscles, only to find they have not yet learned how to sit down again. They will stand and cry until someone helps them down. But within minutes, the average baby is standing again, trying out his new-found skill. With constant practice the infant learns to master each new movement.

By the time he is three years old his muscles probably are coordinated enough for the complex movements demanded in the playground. Now is the time for him to learn more about his body and how it operates in space. He learns that if he moves it in a certain way, the swing will go high. He also learns, sometimes painfully, that he cannot get off the swing while it is moving. On the sliding board he learns to climb, sit, push off, and slow down. The jungle gym reminds him that if his feet are dangling in mid-air, he dare not take his hands off the bar.

An adult may not realize that these are skills a young child must learn before he can feel completely at ease in his world. The child care teacher recognizes a child's need to use all his muscles and provides plenty of opportunities for active play.

Curiosity—This is the push to learn. Human beings are born with an overwhelming drive to find out about their world. It is curiosity that makes the baby snatch at the eye glasses of the person holding him. It is curiosity that leads the toddler to pull the clothing out of the bureau drawers. And it was curiosity, still hard at work in adult scientists, that drove men to land on the moon. When curiosity is given freedom to operate and leads to satisfying experiences, it will grow with the child and keep him learning all his life.

If the curious child meets with too many "no, no's" and disapproving looks from grown-ups, he will soon get the idea that curiosity is something to despise. When this natural desire to find out is gone, learning stops.

The young child who is given the run of his home and is allowed to do many things for himself (with necessary supervision to assure safety) is richer for his experience. Not only has he become familiar with common household equipment, but he has learned how to do more things and probably knows the names of the objects he handled.

To poke, peer, push, and pull at the things around him is the young child's way of finding out. To ask endless "why?" questions of grown-ups is another way. To take apart and put together—to try and fail and try again until he succeeds—all these are ways a child learns through his curiosity.

The child care teacher understands this and encourages it. She knows that a child may quickly forget facts that are taught to him, but he rarely forgets knowledge that he discovers for himself.

Language—"You are a regular chatterbox," sighed the weary mother. "You are just like a radio."

"No, I'm not," replied the little girl positively. "You can turn a radio off."

How true! Just try to turn off the small child who finds as much pleasure in practicing her new ability to speak as she did in using her arm and leg muscles. In the same way that a child's muscles develop with age so that he can perform ever more difficult feats, so a child's language ability develops from the infant's "da-da" to complex sentences. While it is a great temptation to grown-ups to "turn off" the chatterbox, wise mothers and teachers know that the child who can express himself well in language is more at ease in a world geared to communication by words.

Language goes hand-in-hand with curiosity. As a child discovers things for himself, he wants to describe them, talk about them, ask

questions about them. He wants a name for each object he handles. He wants to be able to tell other people what he does, how he feels, what he thinks.

Children who come from families where the grown-ups and children hardly ever talk to each other often have difficulty expressing themselves. The child care teacher can help these children by using the many natural opportunities for speech that come up during a regular day at the center.

"Hi, Jimmy, you look happy today. There's Sandy, and she's wearing red shoes." Teacher greets each child with a sentence just for him. Even if the children do not answer, they are hearing words, and that is the first step toward saying the words.

Lunchtime leads to more different words —talk about food and its taste and appearance, what foods the children like and dislike, where food is grown, and how it gets to the center. "My, this celery is crisp today," teacher remarks. "Oh, I see Sally has eaten all of her mashed potatoes. Weren't they creamy? Dear me, my ice cream is too soft. It must have been out of the freezer too long. Do you like ice cream hard or soft, Martin?"

Teacher's questions encourage the children to express their own feelings. "What color do you want to make the rabbit, Sally? Which story shall we hear today? Did it scare you when the wolf jumped at Little Red Riding Hood?" The teacher goes through the day talking about everything as it happens and trying to get the children to reply. At first they may just listen, but soon they will find that it is fun to have someone else listen to them, and they will begin to use the words they have heard.

Organizing Ability—Did you ever stop to think about the number of different experiences that come to us through our senses every minute of our lives? While looking at television, for instance, our eyes see the pictures, our ears hear what is being said, yet we may feel a breeze blowing in the window, may taste the coffee we just drank, and smell the coffee aroma. We sense all of these feelings at the same time. Yet, through it all we can understand what is happening on TV. Unconsciously we are sorting out the impressions, or stimuli, that we can't use (the wind, the smell of coffee) and are storing the stimuli that we want (the TV program). We are able to do this complicated task because we have developed the ability to organize our experiences into patterns that can be used over and over again in daily [illegible] This ability involves the higher processes of thinking.

The baby looks and looks; he listens and listens; he tastes and sucks; and he feels with his hands the things around him. He combines what he sees, what he feels, and what happens when he does something to these things. All this hard work produces patterns in his mind which he can use in thinking. These patterns become maps of the world the baby knows. They help him behave in certain ways in certain situations. Each child develops his own map of his environment and his patterns of behavior.

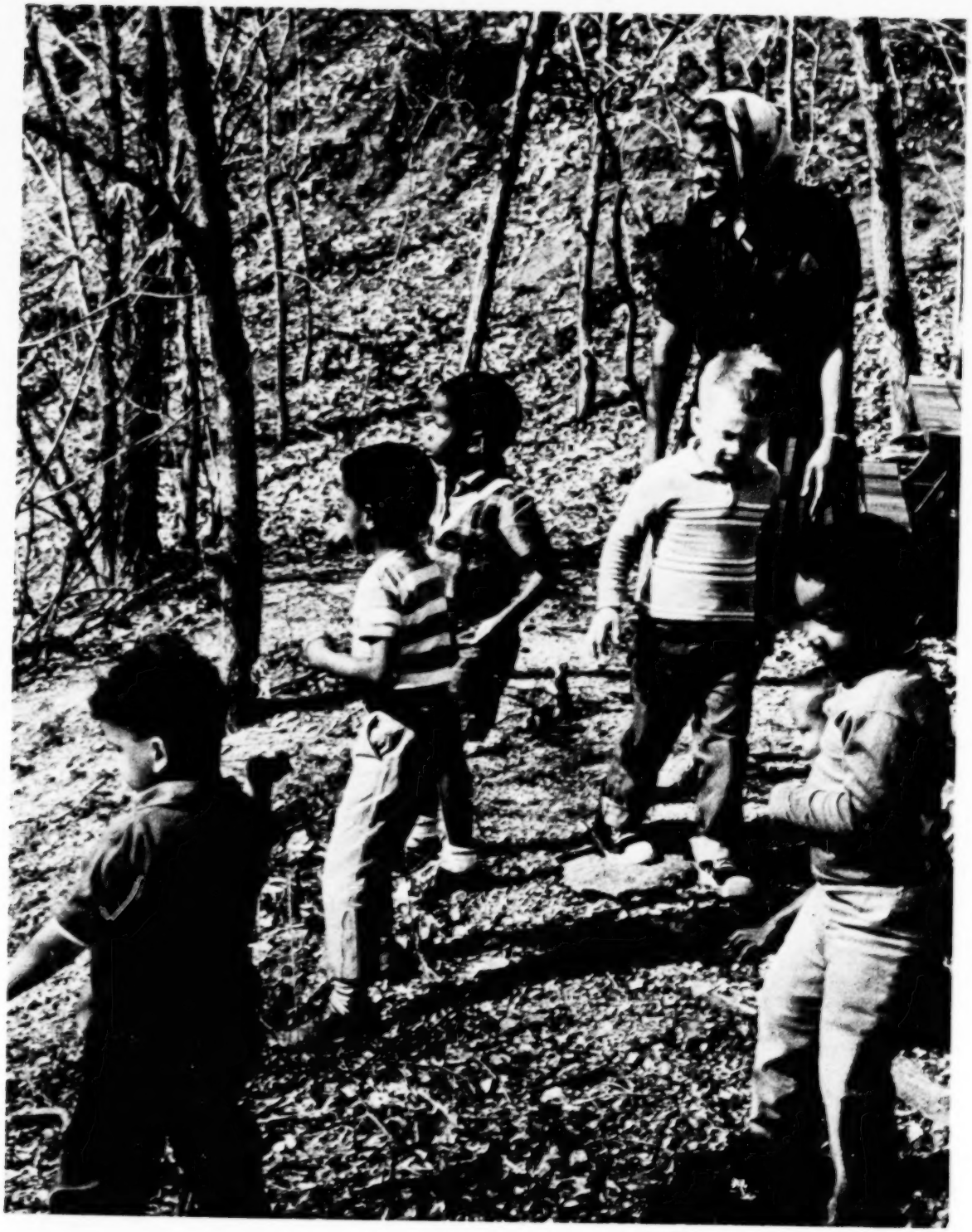
As the child's world broadens, he must rearrange his map to cover a wider area and to include more experiences. When the baby gives up his bottle and begins to drink from a cup, he ha. replaced an earlier pattern with a more complex one. This is the process of growing up. It is a kind of learning that continues throughout life. When the ability to unlearn old patterns and learn new ones stops, one becomes set in his ways—out of step with the times. No matter how old a person is when he stops developing new maps of his experience, he stops learning.

The knowing mother and teacher will see that it is always rewarding for the child to unlearn old babyish habits and learn new more mature ones.

how does a child learn?

Exploration—How many words would it take to describe what it is like to wade ankle-deep in a cold brook? Yet, you have only to plunge a bare foot into a cold stream once to know forever after exactly how it feels.

This is the way children learn for themselves about the world. They explore it with all



Exploring new places stimulates curiosity.

their senses. They do various things to the objects around them to see what difference it makes. What a thrill it is for a young child to mix the pigment and water together to make his own paints which he uses to draw a picture for mother!

The curious child, however, is not necessarily the cleanest child. Experimentation is often messy, and the harassed mother or teacher is tempted to scold, "Now look at the red spot on the floor, Dan. Next time let me mix the paint." Unfortunately, the next time Dan's curiosity prods him to try something new, he may remember the frown and play it safe by ignoring his urge. A child learns to enjoy learning only when curiosity pays off with pleasure.

The child care center encourages Dan's exploring nature by providing a wealth of toys and materials, such as sand boxes, blocks of different sizes and shapes, objects of different textures and weights, and sorting boxes, plus lots of time outdoors where the possibilities for exploration are endless.

Trial and Error—This is a way of learning by doing and profiting by the mistakes. It is how adults, as well as children, must approach most new situations. When a young child begins to put together a new puzzle, he uses trial and error, trying to fit first one piece and then another until the right one falls into place. The next time he makes fewer mistakes. After several times he can do it correctly on the first attempt.

When a child approaches a problem by trial and error, he eventually learns to solve it, and in the process he learns that mistakes are a natural part of learning. It helps him to accept his own errors as a step toward accomplishing his task.

Pain—An infant several months old will cry when taken to the clinic where he has been inoculated before, even though no one has come near him with a needle. He remembers the pain from the last time and makes it quite clear he wants no more of the needle, doctor, or office. One sting usually is enough to keep an older child from trying to pick up a bumblebee again. Because pain is one of our most vivid experiences, it jolts us into learning rapidly what is likely to cause pain so that we may avoid it in the future.

Children may learn things as a result of pain that we do not want them to learn. If a child learns after a burned finger not to touch the stove,

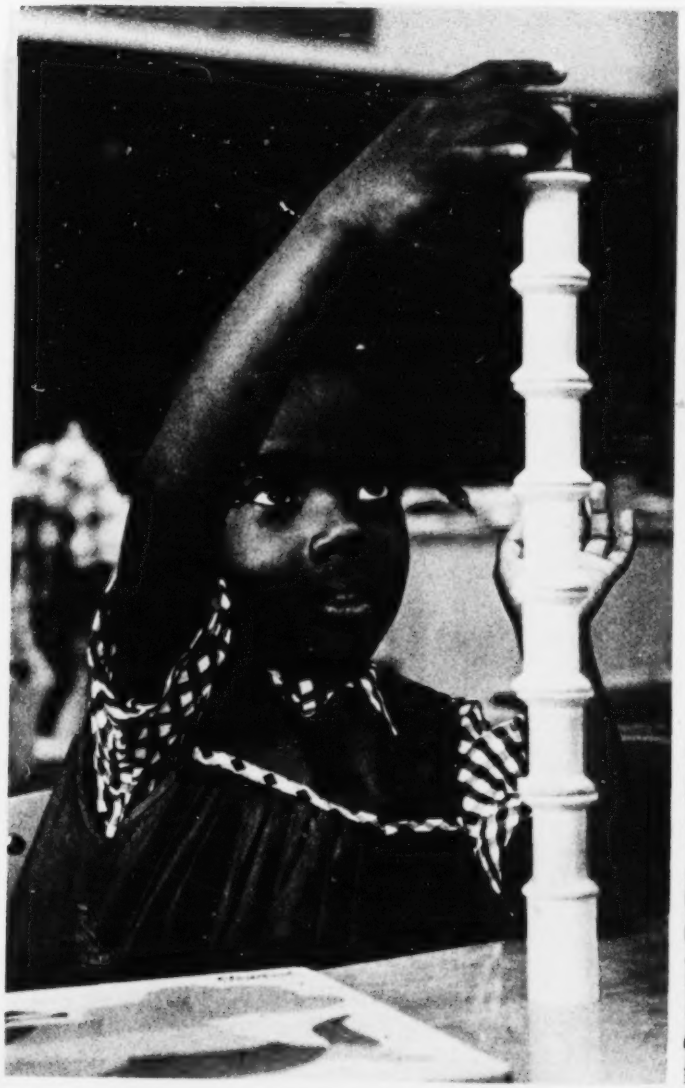
Building with blocks helps children clarify their ideas of houses and other structures.

he has stored away useful knowledge. Sometimes adults intentionally hurt a child to teach him a lesson, but end up teaching him the wrong thing.

When a teacher slaps a child for spitting, for instance, the child may learn that spitting is wrong, but that slapping is all right because even teacher does that. A beating is more likely to teach the child to hate the person giving the beating than to teach him not to do whatever he did that prompted the beating.

Pleasure—"More! More!" shriek the children when the out-of-breath teacher tries to bring a game of "Ring Around Rosie" to an end. They are having fun, and human beings want to repeat actions that bring them pleasure, just as they want to avoid situations that cause pain. When learning is fun, children naturally want to keep on learning.

If Tommy finds a brightly colored pebble on his way to school, and teacher displays great interest in it, he probably will look even harder tomorrow for something to show her. Tommy's pleasure in the attention he receives helps him to sharpen his powers of observation—an important skill in the process of learning.



Learning about balancing develops coordination.

And success brings triumph and pride.

Smiles, conversations with teacher, praise of work well done, and the general feeling of self-satisfaction that comes when you know someone recognizes you—all of these are rewards that spur children and adults on to further learning and greater accomplishments. Wise teachers and mothers use such rewards freely.

Imitation—Did you ever try to *tell* someone how to skip rope or catch a ball or make a bed? You can spend hundreds of useless words and still not get your message across. Fortunately, we usually don't try to use more than two words, "Watch me!" Then we do what we are trying to teach, and our pupil learns by observing and imitating.

Young children learn by copying what grown-ups and other children do. When a child has a warm relationship with another person, his desire to imitate that person is very strong. "Hero worship" it is sometimes called. If only the desire to imitate would automatically turn on when the hero's behavior is worthy of imitation and turn off when it is not!

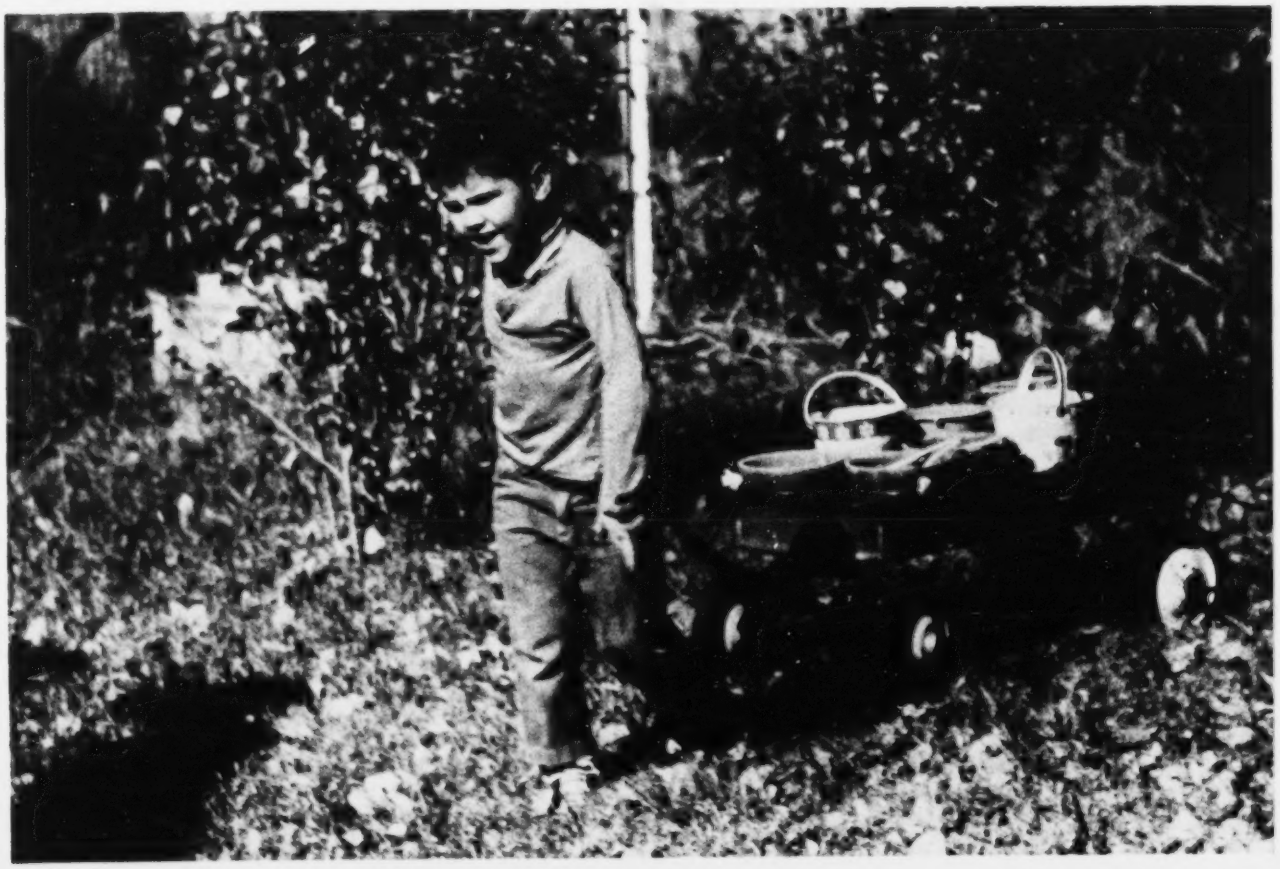
Because imitation is such a strong urge in children, it is essential that young children be able to identify themselves with a grown-up whose standards are high and whose approach to life is worth copying. This hero can very easily be the child care teacher whom the child considers a special friend.

Participation—This is a first cousin to learning by imitation. It means joining in the action. Teachers find it is the easiest way to introduce a newcomer to life in the child care center. Instead of trying to teach him the words and actions to a singing game, the teacher will take the child's hand and lead him in playing the game. Soon the newcomer knows it as well as everyone else.

Communication—Can you imagine what it might be like to live in a foreign country where everyone spoke a different language that you couldn't speak or understand? Think of the frustration in getting even the basic necessities of life! How could you ask for a drink of water?

This is what life would be like if we did not have language to communicate with the people around us. We live in a world of words. They link us with our environment and give us a means of sorting out the information we receive. We use words to identify, classify, and compare objects. Vague ideas become clearer when we put them into words. We use words to ask for what we want and to tell how we feel. Sometimes just putting our worries into words makes them go away. Without words we would not be able to think in an orderly fashion.

The child who has few words to call upon is bewildered in a society that is so geared to language. Perhaps his mother is away at work all day and he spends considerable time with other children. Or maybe his parents are too tired after work to talk with him very much. Before he can begin to enjoy all the thrills of learning, he must first learn to communicate with his teacher and his classmates. Once the channels are open, learning comes spontaneously.



Imitating someone he loves, Bill is a "trucker-man" like his father.

Learning parts of the body is fun.

what does a child need to know?

Trust the World—Would you take the word of someone you didn't trust? Of course you wouldn't. Neither will a child. If his world has been unkind to him and given him more punishments than rewards, he is suspicious of everyone and everything. His mind is closed to the joys of discovering new knowledge. Even with the help of the most understanding teacher, he cannot learn by any method until he first learns that there are people whom he can trust.

The child who has enjoyed a close relationship with his family since babyhood, on the other hand, rushes to embrace the world and everything in it. He instantly trusts his teacher because he has never known anyone he cannot trust.

The challenge to the child care teacher is to help the distrustful child overcome his feelings toward the world. A little mothering on the part of the teacher goes a long way toward establishing trust. Once the child feels secure, he is ready to receive new knowledge.

His Own Body—A person's own body is his most important possession. An infant will focus his eyes on his own hand, fascinated by its appearance. As children grow older they not only remain concerned with their own bodies, but become aware

of the bodies of others as well. They recognize that some people are bigger than others, or fatter, or shorter. They also notice that boys are different from girls.

Learning the names for the parts of the body, possibly pointing out the knees, eyebrows, hips for instance, on a large picture, can give a child more assurance about his own body. Games like "Looby Loo" (I put my right hand in, I put my right hand out) and dancing give a child practice in controlling the movements of his body through space.

More strenuous activities on a balance board, wheeled toys, or anything suitable for climbing allows a child to sense the relationship of his body to distance, height, and other characteristics of space. Child care centers with ample outdoor space can offer all kinds of opportunities for children to use their muscles. While expensive gym equipment is nice, what could be more fun than climbing a tree? Or clambering over a big log or a pile of old tires? An adult should always be close at hand to supervise the playground activities and protect the children from accidents. A fall from the branch of a tree is a painful way to learn about heights.

Familiar Objects—"Mommy, please buy me a fur apple," pleads Janie to her bewildered mother. After many questions and a lot of common sense, Mother finally figures out that Janie is asking for a peach. Janie didn't know the word "peach," but she did know that the fruit was fuzzy and red, so she used the knowledge she had to make herself understood.

Janie and all other young children need many different experiences to make them familiar with objects around them. They need to know that a big block makes a better foundation for a building than a small one. That they cannot dig tunnels in dry sand. That a quart of water will overflow a cup but will fit with room left over in a bucket. That sugar is sweet and vinegar is sour.

Such odd bits of knowledge are the stuff thinking is made of. The human brain is capable of storing miscellaneous facts picked up in everyday experiences and using them when they apply to the problem at hand. These are the bits and pieces that make up the child's map of his environment that tells him how to operate in his world. The larger his stock of information, the more detailed is his map, and the clearer his thinking.

People—A wide knowledge of objects is useless if a child does not understand his own relationship to people around him. He needs to file away all sorts of information about what to call certain people, how they are related to him, what they do for him, and what he is expected to do for them. He needs such facts as: his mother is not his teacher; his grandmother is not his aunt; he calls his father Daddy, but he calls the man who gives him shots, Dr. Smith; the milkman helps by bringing milk every day; men like Daddy are carpenters, or bricklayers, or policemen, while ladies like Mommy are teachers, nurses, or sales clerks.

With household containers and a pile of sand, children learn about sizes, shapes, and what fits into what while they also develop muscle control by pouring.

The child care center can help straighten out some of these complex relationships which confuse many a youngster. The teacher can invite visitors who work in different occupations to come and talk with the children. In normal conversation the teacher can use words like uncle, nephew, fireman, minister. Playing house or acting out life-like situations with puppets are all ways to help a child discover where he fits in with the people around him.

Time—"We wash our hands *before* we eat our lunch. We take a rest *after* lunch." The child care teacher emphasizes the words "before" and "after" for she knows that young children are just beginning to understand time. They may know "today," but are still confused that "tomorrow," when it comes, is also "today." Such words as "later" or "after awhile" may mean very little to them. While taking every opportunity to introduce the words and ideas of time, the teacher must also keep in mind that "in a little while" may seem like an eternity to a frightened child waiting for his mother to return.

Realistic Fear—"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread" is a poetic way of saying that realistic fear is part of the makeup of every intelligent person. Fear is born in us to alert us to danger. Sensible fear is nothing to be ashamed of.

Fears in children are just as natural, though often are directed toward objects that do no harm. The child who is afraid of the dark usually will outgrow this fear, but hopefully will exchange it for a real fear of speeding cars, or loaded guns, or unknown drugs.

Children's fears often grow out of their limited experience. A young child may be afraid to use the toilet because he might be flushed down. Strange places and people frighten many children. The teacher can help a child handle his fears by encouraging him to talk about them. The wise teacher knows that fear, itself, is healthy. Rather than make fun of a child for his fears, she helps him to examine them and direct them against real dangers.

Handle Anger—Anger, like fear, is a natural emotion. And like fear, needs to be controlled and directed. When a young child flies into a fury because someone else is playing with his favorite toy, it takes a major effort on the part of the teacher to calm him. An angry response from an adult only increases his anger.

"I know you are angry, Tom," teacher assures the crying youngster. "Let's talk about it after you stop crying." Or she may simply put her arms around Tom to show him that she still cares for him even if he did lose his temper. When he has become quieter, teacher may offer Tom a substitute toy to play with until his favorite one is available.

Anger, directed and controlled, can be the push behind many worthwhile accomplishments. Great leaders like Martin Luther King were driven by anger at the injustices they saw, but they were able to channel their anger to bring about positive results. Banging your head on the floor in anger, in the long run, only gives you a headache.

Cope with Frustration—Americans are an impatient people. We want what we want when we want it. We don't like to wait. Some young people, too impatient to work and save for the things they want, turn to crime as a way to get rich fast. Our American society today is paying a terrible price for our past failure in helping our children learn to cope with frustration.

Every child faces numerous frustrations in the course of a day at the child care center. Someone may be riding the tricycle when he wants to ride it. The bathroom may be occupied when he wants to use it. He may be at the end of the lunch line and feels too hungry to wait.

In each instant the frustration is easier to accept if the teacher is alert. She can remind him that children in the center take turns. She can point out that the wagon is free for him to play with while he is waiting for the tricycle. She must remember, however, to see that he gets a turn on the trike without too long a wait. She also must realize that there are times when waiting may not be desirable, as when children are waking from their naps. The early risers should be allowed to get up and engage in some quiet activity while the others are still sleeping. Lying on the bed for a long time with nothing to do only leads children to play with their own bodies.

The child who understands the need for waiting, who willingly accepts substitutes, and who is able to do so many interesting things that he isn't dependent on just one activity to make him happy is a child who has begun to cope with frustration.

Be Responsible — "Michael stays after school every day to clean the blackboards for his teacher, yet he won't do a thing at home," his mother laments. It is a common complaint of mothers all over that children do not accept their responsibilities at home. Probably Michael is more willing to help his teacher because she makes the doing of the tasks more pleasant than his mother does. She may show her approval in the quality of his work and make him feel that his efforts are contributing to the well-being of the entire class.

Work that is appreciated becomes fun. Even the routine chores of life are bearable if the person has learned to approach his responsibilities in a positive manner. The time to develop this attitude toward work is when the child is young and naturally wants to do grown-up jobs. It is good for his self-image to feel needed. And besides, every mother and teacher can use some extra help.

A four-year-old is much more capable than most people give him credit for. In many child care centers such young children wipe up spilled milk, hang up their coats, plant and weed the garden, mix paint and scrub off the tables after painting, set the table—the list goes on and on. Mothers might take a lesson from the teacher who realizes that children can do and should be encouraged to do many routine tasks as part of their normal day.

Just be sure the job is not too difficult for the child's abilities, or he will become frustrated and refuse to do the things he can do. Also remember his efficiency may not be up to an adult's, so don't expect too much.

how can the teacher help?

Even though it is true that children are born with all the equipment they need to learn by themselves, an understanding teacher is still essential to create an atmosphere for learning. If you want to plant flower seeds, you know you cannot simply scatter them on top of hard-packed clay and expect them to grow. You have to break up the soil, add fertilizer of some kind, plant the seeds the correct depth, and see that they are watered regularly. You also know that you must wait until the weather is warm so that the baby plants will not freeze. You, yourself, have nothing to do with cracking the hard seed cover and making the green shoots push through the ground. That is the work of nature. But you have prepared the bed so the seeds will grow.

Setting the table is fun for a capable child and a help for teacher.

This is what a good teacher does for a child. She doesn't try to jam his head full of facts that he will forget very soon, but she "prepares the seed bed," so that when the child discovers facts for himself, they will take root and be stored away for future use. How can a teacher do this?

Gain Confidence of Child—First of all she must have a warm relationship with the child. She must do everything she can to show the child that he can trust her. A good teacher knows a friendly smile, or reassuring hug, or just five minutes' time to listen helps develop this close bond between teacher and child that pays off in a happy, receptive, eager-to-learn child.

Teacher leads the way and shows that learning can be fun.

Provide an Atmosphere for Learning—Once the teacher-child relationship has been built, the teacher can then show a child that learning is fun. She allows him freedom to explore with all his senses. She provides him with toys and materials he needs to find out about all sorts of things. She encourages the child by appreciating his efforts with such comments as "That was a good job, Cheryl." "You made a fine car, David."

Many children in child care centers have never had toys of their own and actually do not know how to play. The teacher can help by doing things with the child. Looking at a picture book can become a delightful experience when teacher sits down and shows a bewildered child how to enjoy it. Providing whatever help a child needs to learn is the teacher's challenge.

Be a Good Example—Children learn so many things by imitating the grown-ups they love that a teacher can help just by being the kind of person she would like the children to be. If she wants them to speak softly, she must speak softly. If she wants them to be honest, she must be honest with them. If she displays a real love of learning, the children will sense it and try to copy it.

Talk and Listen—A good teacher is aware of the importance of language and turns every child care situation into an opportunity to talk with—not to —the children. And just as important, to listen to them! Storytime can lead to conversations about any number of subjects from how hungry Goldilocks must have been to eat the little bear's porridge to how wise the third little pig was to know that a strong house offers needed protection. A walk in the park leads to talk about trees, flowers, birds, insects, and rocks. Even buttoning up coats and putting on boots can be the start of a conversation about the weather.

Help a Child Control Behavior—If a child is angry or belligerent toward the world, his energies are so occupied with his feelings that he cannot put his attention to the important job of learning. The teacher must show such a child that his behavior is not making him or anyone else happy. She must let him know that she continues to love him despite the way he acts, but that she cannot tolerate his behavior. Again, the warm bond between teacher and child is what determines whether a teacher will be successful in helping a child control his behavior.

Love the Child—Many books have been written about how children learn and how a teacher should teach. But many of them overlook one basic truth. A child will not learn unless he wants to learn. The best educated teacher in the world with a string of university degrees behind her name cannot make a child learn.

The key to preparing a child to learn is love. Children who grow up in a loving family face the world with an assurance that the world is good and worth learning about. The love within the family, regardless of how many years the mother and father went to school, has prepared the seed bed so that learning can grow. The unfortunate child, who has not experienced love, meets the world with a hard clay surface that will not receive the seeds of learning. A large helping of love from the child care teacher may change this child's entire life.

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